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GURU JNANA SAMBANDHA

OF

DHARMAPURAM

M. ARUNACHALAM

DHARMAPURAM ADHINAM
DHARMAPURAM

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DHARMAPURAM

M. ARUNACHALAM

DHARMAPURAM ADHINAM
DHARMAPURAM
1972

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PREFACE

Philosophy runs in the veins of the Indian; much more so of the Tamilian, in whose land Siva the Supreme dwells; Manikkavachakar sang :

Hail, Siva, Lord of the South,
Hail, Lord of all the realms.

Innumerable have been the inspired savants who were born in this land and who had promulgated the Saiva faith by their tours, songs, worship and their living. When foreign invasions sought to undermine and destery the ageless cult of the Saivas, many gifted seers were born here, through God's grace to lead the people in the path of God and follow their ancient religion with greater faith and determination. Some of those seers were exponents of philosophy and authors of philosophical treatises; besides they had founded religious orders which trained mature minds to live a godly life and help other sturuggling souls to advance in the path of God. One such seer was Guru Jnanasambandha, founder of the Dharmapurom Adhinam and monastery; he was besides a realised seer, an expenent of philosophy, ond the author of many philosophical treatises.

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An account of the life Guru Jnanasambandha and of his message is given in these pages in the hope that it would strengthen the people's faith in God and would also help them to appreciate the religious work done by the followers of Guru Jnanasambandha better.

I am happy that this book is released this day, the anniversary of Guru Jnanasambandha, when his Holiness Sri Shanmukha Desika Paramacharya twentysixth in the line of the spiritual preceptors after him, performs his first guru puja *(worship of the master) after his assumption of office.*

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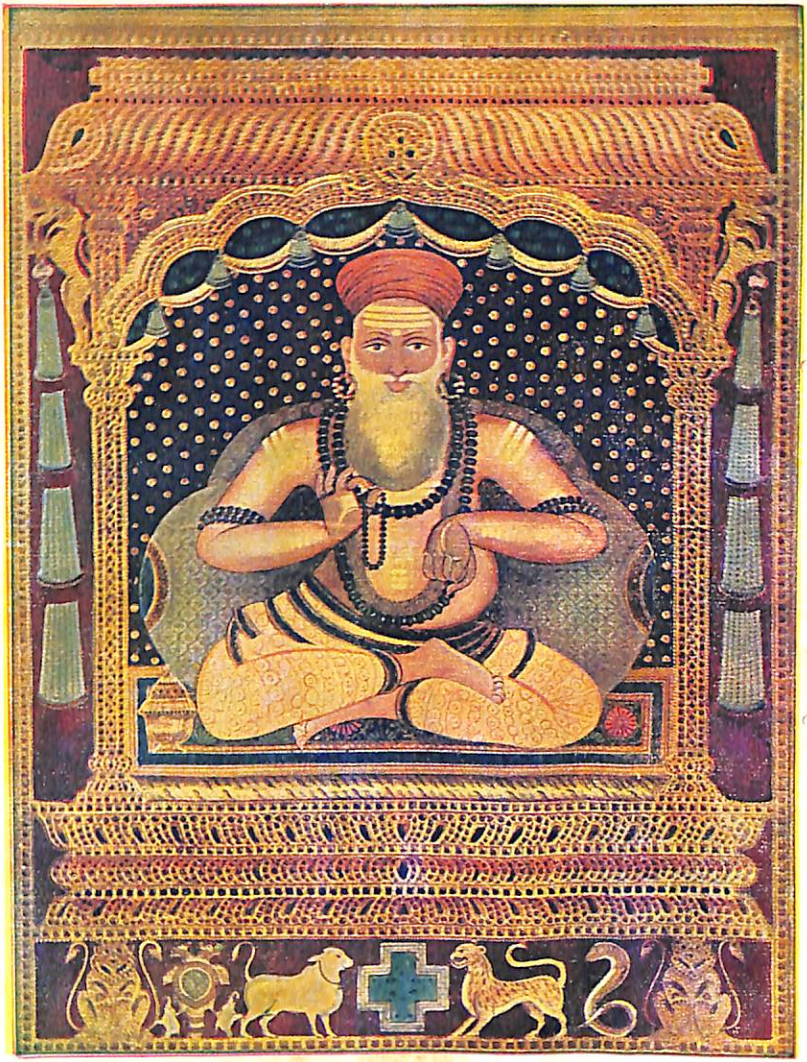

His Holiness
Sri-La-Sri Gurugnana Sambhanda Desika
Paramacharya Swamigal
Founder of Dharmapuram Adhinam

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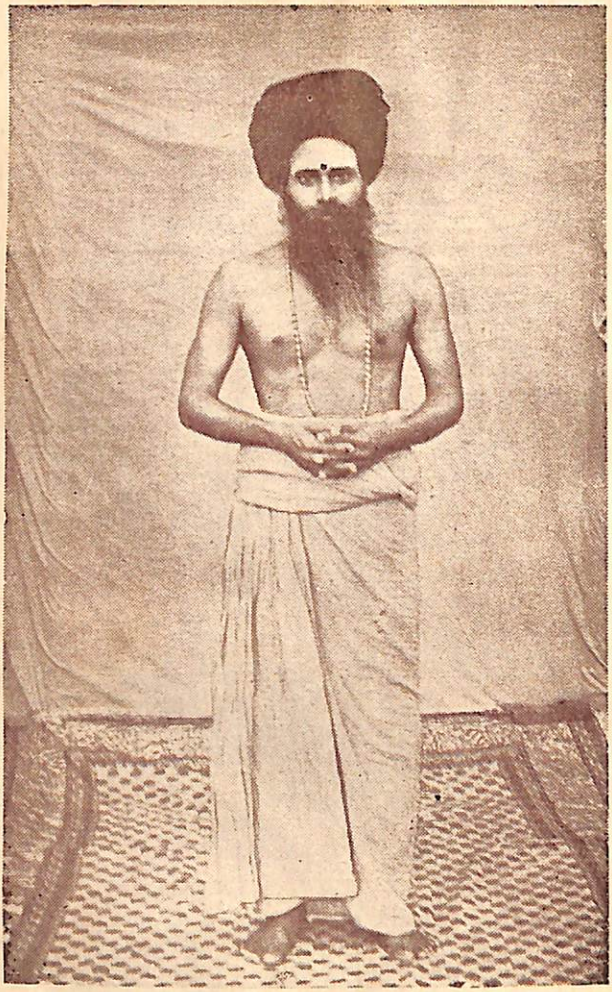

HIS HOLINESS
SRI SHANMUKHA DESIKA PARAMACHARYA

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GURU JNANA SAMBANDHA

INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is the collective name by which the various religious faiths, which had moulded the life and thought of the peoples of India through several millennia in the past, are generally known. Of these, the Saiva faith has been hailed by many thinkers and scholars as the ancient and indigenous faith, which prevailed in the whole of India from the pre-historic past. From an investigation of the excavations at Mohenja daro and Harappa, Sir John Marshall declared that Saivism was the most ancient living religion of the world. A great many western scholars have expressed similar thoughts.

'Saiva Siddhanta philosophy is the choicest product of the Dravidian intellect; it is the most elaborate, influential, and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all the religions of India."*

* G. U. Pope.

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'There is no school of thought and no system of faith that comes to us with anything like the claims of the Saiva Siddhanta. As a system of religious thought, as an expression of faith and life, the Saiva Siddhanta is by far the best that South India possesses. Indeed, it would not be rash to include the whole of India and to maintain that, judged by its intrinsic merits, the Saiva Siddhanta represents the high water mark of Indian life."†

The same Saiva faith which existed in the whole of India some seven thousand years ago, is still followed in the South of India, in the Tamilnad, by about forty million people, in its most cultured and universal form. It is still a living faith that shapes the lives and aspirations of these people, guides their destinies, brings solace and peace to the afflicted, and holds forth, amidst all the encircling gloom, hope and comfort.

The growth, development and diffusion of the Saiva religion and the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy is traceable with a fair degree of authenticity from the beginning of the

† W. Goudie.

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Christian era. A number of saints had lived between the third and the twelfth centuries and they had sung devotional songs on Siva the Supreme, wherein the deepest emotions of love and surrender had been poured forth, along with the fulness and abundance of a blissful god-experience. The major part of the songs, since collected into the Saiva canon of twelve Books, constitute the cream of Tamil lyrical poetry and also of its devotional music. These hymns form the basic material for the modern Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. Philosophy is the systematization of the experiences and intuitions of the sage and the saint. The hymns of the saints in Saivism had moulded the character and outlook of generations of the Tamil people and their culture. They had so influenced the Chola emperors who ruled the Tamil country from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries that they studded the country with temples for Siva in granite, which are now existing in all their glory, even after the lapse of a thousand years. The number of such huge temples has caused foreign critics to remark that 'the Tamils are a race of temple builders'. No higher tribute to the univer-

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sality of the Saiva faith can be paid. All the Chola monarchs without a single exception had been followers of the Saiva faith.

The greatest among the Saiva Saints for all time were the four Samaya acharyas (spiritual teachers) Saint Tirujnana-sambandha, Saint Appar, Saint Sundara and Saint Manikkavachaka. These are all historical figures, who had lived from the seventh to the ninth centuries. They had toured the many Siva shrines in the Tamil country, and had sung their devotional songs under an ecstatic god-intoxication. The devotional songs of these acharyas and the others, about eighteen thousand verses, had been collected into the Saiva canon of of twelve Books.

Some time after these attained beatitude, we have a succession of Saiva teachers, one following the other as master and diciple. These again are traditionally four and they are called the *Santana acharyas* as they came in a line of succession promulgating the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy (santanam-lineage). The Santana acharyas reduced the cream of philosophical thought contained in the songs of the Samaya acharyas into

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a logical and reasoned exposition of the ultimate realities of philosophy. These acharyas are Meikandar, Arulnandi Sivacharya, Marai Jnanasambandha of Kadandai and Umapati Sivacharya. These had lived from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries; they had not toured the shrines but had stayed in their own place, teaching the students who came to them for enlightenment. Meikandar* had founded the religious order of Saivism and after him the others were the heads of the holy line one after the other, in the same order. This line of spiritual teachers is tradinally considered to have descended from the Supreme Guru of Kailas; the order of instruction was from Siva to Nandi, to Sage Sanat kumara, Satyajnana-darsini, Sage Paranjoti and lastly Meikandar. The teachers upto Paranjoti were on the celestial plane; the line of teachers on the terrestrial plane begins with Meikandar. Hence the line of Meikandar is known as the *Tiru-Kailaya Paramparai* (the line of instruction from Kailas).

Saint Umapati Sivacharya was the last of the four Santana acharyas. He taught Saint Arulnamasivaya, and the headship

* Vide Appendix Note 1, Meikandar.

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passed on to him from Umapati. The line of succession branched off into different lines after Arulnamasivaya. One of the important branches is the line of Dharmapuram and its founder was Guru Jnanasambandha. He founded the jnanapeeta* now known as the Dharmapuram Adhinam. Beginning from Saint Arulnamasivaya, Guru Jnanasambandha was the eighth in the order of the acharyas. Some of them have also been illustrious spiritual leaders who had written valuable treatises on the Saiva metaphysics and philosophy, but it was Jnanasambandha who established the religious order in one place, namely Dharmapuram, and from there ushered in a new order of light in the Saiva world.

The keynote of the lives of these acharyas is an absolute surrender to the will of God. After such a surrender, it is as though God takes over the direction of the soul through life. Such had been the case with Guru Jnanasambandha, the founder of the Dharmapuram Adhinam, and in the following pages, we shall see how his life had

* Jnanapeeta-seat of spiritual headship.

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been moulded and directed by the hand of God and how he had been chosen to succeed an unbroken line of disciples from Siva Himself, the Lord on Mount Kailas. The holy line of preceptors from Guru Jnanasambandha continues unbroken to this day.

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SRI VILLIPUTHUR

In the far south of the Tamil Country in India lies the important town of Sri Villiputhur, in modern Ramnad district. It is celebrated in legend and history as the birth place of the Vaishnava Saint, Periyalwar and his foster daughter Andal, both of whom had sung inspired hymns on Lord Vishnu; their hymns have been collected into the first Book of the Vaishnava Canon. Guru Jnanasambandha, the illustrious founder of the Dharmapuram line of Saiva preceptors, was born in this place, in a middle class agricultural family, by the middle of the sixteenth century.

At that period there lived in this place a happy couple, Subrahmanya Pillai and his wife, Minakshi.* They belonged to a

* Minakshi (=with eyes like the fish) is the name of the presiding deity in the Madurai shrine, and the consort of Siva there.

† It may be remembered that Meikandar, the first preceptor of the Saiva Siddhanta order also came of this community.

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community known as the Karkatha velala community,† which was noted for its adherence to the Saiva faith and for its vegetarian way of life, from time immemorial. The vegetarian way of life symbolises love for all creation of God and it is one of the basic doctrines of Saivism. Amidst all kinds of political, social and religious turmoil during the last two thousand years in the Tamilnad, the vegetarian way of food, called the *Saiva* way of food, has been held in the greatest esteem and veneration in the land. Even today, the term Saiva is equated with the vegetarian way of food. The Karkathar clan had been held in the greatest veneration from the beginning of the Christian era because of its identity with vegetarianism.

The community traces its legendary origin to Umadevi, the consort of Siva, who performed *Sivapuja* at Kancheepuram aeons ago and had delegated to these people the religious duty of performing the thirtytwo *dharmas* (duties in life and charities).

Subrahmanyam and his family were all worshippers of Lord Siva. The couple led an ideal householder's life, devoting their resources to the worship of Siva, both in the

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temple and in their home, and to the feeding of the devotees of God, as prescribed in the scriptures. In due time, the grace of Siva settled on the couple and an illustrious son was born to them at an auspicious moment, on a Monday, held sacred to Siva. A divine radiance lit up the peaceful countenance of the baby, as though it foretold a higher purpose to be fulfilled by him in time.

The name of Tiru Jnanasambandha, the boy saint of Sirkali* and the first of the Saiva Samaya acharyas, was an inspiring name and held the greatest fascination among all the Saivas in the land. The parents named the child Jnanasambandha, after Tiru Jnanasambandha, in a prophetic moment of inspiration. The name signified one who had communion with Supreme Knowledge. Saint Tiru Jnanasambandha lived in the middle of the seventh century. As a small child of three years, he was fed

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* For centuries after Tiru Jnanasambandha, Sirkali has figured prominently in the evolution of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamilnad. It is now an important town in the Tanjavur district. It houses a large Siva temple complete with all its adjuncts and sub-temples; its administration vests with the Dharmapuram Adhinam.

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with the milk of Supreme Knowledge by Sakti, the consort of Siva; his life story is well known. He had toured the entire Tamil country, visiting all the important temples where Siva was enshrined and had sung about four thousand quatrains in praise of Siva. All of the songs had been set to music. He had so vigorously promulgated the Saiva faith that all the alien faiths in the land had disappeared. His songs have been collected nto the Saiva canon as the first three books. They are unsurpassed, for hymnal beauty, emotional outburst, literary value and philosophical content, in the whole range of the Tamil literature of the last two thousand years.

It was indeed an inspired moment when Subrahmanyam chose the name Jnanasambandha for his son. Saint Tiru Jnanasambandha the Samayacharya was enveloped in Divine Grace while yet a child, and in like manner we shall find that this child also came under divine guidance while yet a boy.

The child grew up and in due course received all secular education both from his father and from the others. Through divine

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will, he easily mastered all the arts and learnt all the sastras in the Tamil and the Sanskrit languages, and attained the momentous age of sixteen. The family deity of Subrahmanyam was Lord Sundaresa of Madurai (variously known as Somasundara, Sokkanatha and Sokkalingam). At about this time, Subrahmanya Pillai planned to go to Madurai with his wife and son and worship Lord Sundaresa there.

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MADURAI

Madurai is the second largest city in the modern state of Tamilnad. It was the capital city of the Pandya kingdom, comprising all the southernmost districts of Tamilnad. It was ruled over in ancient times by a dynasty of Tamil princes known as the Pandyas. In religion, legend and literature, it is hailed as one of the most ancient cities in India. Saint Appar says that Lord Siva revealed Himself here in the form of a *Sivalingam* long before any other shrine came into existence. In the concept of the universe as the Cosmic Form of the Supreme Being, the Madurai shrine is considered as the mystic centre, *dvadasanta*, situated twelve inches beyond the crown of Being. The presiding deity of the city is Minakshi, the consort of Siva. According to legends, she ruled here as a princess of the Pandya dynasty. Aeons ago, Lord Siva came down on earth here and ruled over the city as Her consort, Somasundara.

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This city had been the greatest seat of all culture and all secular and religious learning in the ancient past. The Pandyas had established here several universities in succession. According to legends, Lord Siva Himself had taken the form of a poet and participated in the deliberations of the university.

During the first millennia after Chirst, historical evidences are available on the line of the Pandyas who ruled over the city. At the request of the Pandya queen Managayarkkarasi, Saint Tiru Jnanasambandha visited the city in the middle of the seventh century. At an earlier period, this state had been overrun by an alien tribe of Jain invaders and the Saiva religion had been suppressed. Tiru Jnanasambandha through God's grace vanquished his Jain opponents here in philosophical disputation, won back the king to Saivism, and restored this ancient religion in the land. Many miracles were also performed here by Lord Sundaresa for the sake of Saint Manikkavachaka of the Tiruvachakam fame. Thus there is always a halo attached to the city through long association with religion and literature.

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On an auspicious day, Subrahmanyam started for Madurai with his wife and son. He covered the distance of fifty miles in a few days and reached the city in due time. The family took part in the various occasions of worship in the temple daily and stayed there for some time, happy in the worship of Lord Sundaresa and Minakshi. Then, duties at home called them back and so Subrahmanyam and his wife set about making preparations for return to Srivilliputhur.

On the day fixed for the return journey, Subrahmanyam went to the temple as usual with his wife and took leave of Lord Sundaresa. At the time of departing however, the parents felt that their son appeared to be unwilling to move away from the shrine. They were perplexed. They could not understand the change which had come over in the mind of the young boy. From the moment when the boy saw Sundaresa and Minakshi, he experienced an inexplicable thrill of supreme joy. The temple worship always gave him infinite joy and he could not wrest himself from it. The temple, the peace and the sense of elevation felt in the Divine Presence, the elaborate rituals forming part of the

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worship, the company of the men of God there, and the daily routine of just living for the occasion of the worship at specified hours, had the greatest appeal to all his senses and, through them, had come to have so firm a hold on his mind that he was quite unwilling to leave the temple.

His eyes feasted on the Lord, his ears devoured the devotional songs sung by the men of God in the temple, his nostrils inhaled the fragrance wafted by the incense in the sanctum, his tongue lisped devotional songs, and his person delighted in the smearing of the sacred ash of Siva. Thus all his five senses functioned for God and his mind functioning through the senses went out to prostrate at the feet of the Lord.

So, when his parents urged him to follow them home, he replied: "My dear parents, I am in duty bound to obey you. You have no doubt given me this body and have a right to call me. But how can I tear myself away from the parents of my soul, who are enshrined in this temple. and who have even a greater right over me? I dare not follow you. Please forgive me."

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The young boy now seems to have had some kind of spiritual awakening and enlightenment. He was born apparently with a mission in life, and the moment for fulfilling that mission had come. His birth as the son of Subrahmanyam and Minakshi of Srivilliputhur was nothing more than an accident. The spirit in him was eternally in bondage to the Supreme Spirit, in this case Lord Sundaresa of Madurai. So he felt he was not wrong in declining to fulfil a duty towards his natural parents. But they could not view it in such a light. They were much bewildered at such a behaviour from their only son. To dispel their anxiety and to set their mind at rest, Jnanasambandha explained to them his position as best as he could, citing also many scriptural authorities in support of his stand, and eloquently pleaded with them to permit him to stay back in Madurai and lead a spiritual life. The parents were unable to answer him, but imagined that perhaps time would cure him, and so stayed on for some more time in the city, fondly hoping that he would change his mind. But the boy was steadfast in his purpose and would not move from the shrine. Finally, realising that nothing more could be done, they left him

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and went home with a heavy heart. Being devout people themselves, the thought that their son might grow up spiritually evolved might perhaps have given them some solace.

Jnanasambandha continued to stay in Madurai. He was enjoying an inward peace resulting from a contemplation of the grace of God. He bathed daily at early morning in the tank of the Golden Lotus, finished his ablutions and offered worship before Sokkanatha and Minakshi in the temple. This went on for a considerable time. While going through this routine daily, his attention used to focus on the austerities practised by some men of God there. The sacred ash adorned their forehead and the *rudraksha** beads (a Saiva emblem) their bodies, their lips were uttering the *Panchakshara* mantra.† He observed that these men always sat on the paved bank of the tank facing north, placed a Siva linga in front, and offered to it a three-fold worship, complete with mantra, bhavana (contemplation) and kriya (ritual). They

* The *eloeocarpus* tree; its small nuts are strung together to make the rosary of the Saivas.

† Mantra – mystic syllable. Panchakshara – the five mystic letters or syllables which signify the Lord's name in Saivism–*na ma si va ya.*

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were beside themselves out of a divine ecstasy and, with tears of joy and faltering lips, they sang rapturously the canonical songs during their worship. As he was watching such worship of the devotees on the banks of the tank, a desire to perform similar worship himself and get immersed in similar divine ecstasy surged up in his mind. His orthodox training made him feel that the grace of God should help him in this regard. When he went into the temple to take part in the ritualistic worship that day as usual, this desire was formost in his mind. But he had no *murti* (image) to worship and no instruction in the mode of worship.

So, he who had so far worshipped in the temple without any desire, except for the joy of worship, now had a request to make. He prayed for a *murti* for his worship and for instruction in the ritual of personal worship. This prayer had an immediate response. That night he had a dream. The Lord appeared before him and said: "My dear boy, we are resting in a casket in the north eastern corner of the tank of the golden lotus. You may find Us there. Take the casket with you, so that you may in time be able to perform the personal worship as desired."

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Waking up, Jnanasambandha was beside himself with joy. "So Lord Sundaresa has graciously answered my humble prayer!" cried he. At day break he went to the lotus tank as usual, and bathed in the north eastern corner as directed in his dream. Lo! there was the casket containing the Sokkalingam! His joy knew no bounds. Taking it with both hands, he went to the sanctum of the temple and there praised the Grace of the Lord. The young man who had till then never sung a song or composed a line of poetry, now burst into wondrous song:

Thou hast given Thyself to me, O Lord,
in a form sweet to behold.
A strange and mysterious wonder
Thou art,
praised by the celestials.
Lead me into the ocean of perfect bliss,
O Lord Sokkanatha of Madurai.

He sang a poem of ten verses in this strain, on the grace of Sokkanatha:

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Let me sing of Thee,
always think of Thee,
Let me dance in joy,
freed from all ignorance,
And seek Thine ocean of Bliss
as the only refuge,
O Lord Sokkanatha of Madurai.

Births there are none,
Misery there is none,
Which I had not gave through,
Places there are none,
Where I had not been born and died.
Enough of this sport,
O Lord Sokkanatha of Madurai,
In whose bowers flows,
The nectar of Supreme Bliss.

Hear my prayer, my Lord!
May Thou dwell in this form for ever
And redeem me from all future births,
And confer eternal bliss
on all who worship Thee,
O Lord Sokkanatha of Madurai.

Jnanasambandha had now the *Sivalinga* form for worship; but he knew he was not

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competent to perform the worship of the Lord in that form. In Saiva religious practice, only the initiation by a competent master will confer on one the fitness for performing even the personal worship. So he prayed: "My Lord, in Thine infinite mercy Thou hast graciously given me Thyself in this *linga* form for worship. But again I pray Thee, kindly indicate to me the master who could impart the Supreme Knowledge, and initiate me into the scriptural mode of worship, and grant me the competence therefor." After this prayer he returned to his place, his mind full with the anxiety to find a spiritual preceptor and learn the mode of worship.

That night again he had a dream. Lord Sokkanatha appeared before him and said: "My boy, proceed to Tiru Arur. You will meet there Jnanaprakasa, who hails from a line of Our disciples, who had been given spiritual instruction directly by Us. He shall be your preceptor and he shall initiate you in the path of Supreme Knowledge and instruct you in the mode of the ritualistic worship." Needless to say, Jnanasambandha was extremely happy. He realised fully that God was guiding him every moment of his

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life. With this conviction, he went to the temple early in the morning, worshipped Lord Sokkanatha and Minakshi for the guidance given, and taking leave of them there, started for Tiru Arur in the north, carrying his precious treasure with him.

Meanwhile, Lord Siva appeared before Kamalai Jnanaprakasa* in a dream, in the form of Lord Tyagaraja, the presiding deity of Tiru Arur, and directed him: "My friend, Our boy Jnanasambandha will be appearing here from Madurai on Monday and will go to you. Please receive him and initiate him in the path of Supreme Knowledge and teach him the ritualistic personal worship of Sokkalinga, which he will be carrying with him." Jnanaprakasa was naturally not a little amazed. That the Lord should take so much interest in a young man and that He should command him to take him as a disciple and guide him along the path of Supreme Knowledge! Surely the ways of the Lord were imponderable and inscrutable, thought he. He realised no doubt that there was some divine purpose in Siva's singling out this young man for special favour.

* Vide Appendix, Note 2, Jnanaprakasa.

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Jnanasambandha, who started from Madurai, visited many important shrines of Siva such as Tiru Anaikka on the way and reached Tiru Arur in due time on a Monday morning.

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TIRU ARUR

Tiru Arur in the modern Tanjavur district is about 150 miles to the north east of Madurai. It is one of the most ancient cities in Tamilnad, held very sacred in Saiva legend and history. Of the five Saiva shrines dedicated to the five elements, the Arur shrine is dedicated to the element earth. Legends say that King Manu-niti Chola, ruling here, rode his chariot over the body of his only son, as a punishment for the death of a calf caused by the prince by riding his chariot over it, although unknowingly. Saint Sundara calls himself the servant of all that were born in this place; the belief is that one born here attains salvation with certainty. The Saint was married to Paravai in this city and here Lord Tyagaraja had acted as a messenger of love to Sundara. Many incidents in his life were enacted here. Earlier than Sundara, Saint Appar had sung many moving songs on the temple; he had said that Arur was created long before anything else was created.

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The city was considered to be one of the several capital cities of the Chola emperors. The temple in this city is a very large one. The temple tank called the Kamalalaya is also a very large one.

Jnanasambandha, arriving in this city, bathed in the Kamlalaya and went straight to the presence of Lord Tygaraja*. He poured forth his soul in his prayer to the Lord, for this was Monday, on which he was to meet his *guru*. The longing to meet Jnanaprakasa, the guru appointed by God, filled his heart and his eyes were eagerly searching for him. After praying there, he prayed in the presence of Sakti and then went the round of the corridors and the inner temples.

Jnanaprakasa in the meantime remembered that this was the day appointed for the appearance of Jnanasambandha before him. As usual, he got up early in the morning, performed his personal worship in his home, went to the temple, took part in the worship there, and going round the inner court yards of the temple, he reached the

* Tygaraja is the particular form of Siva specially important in this shrine. The term signifies 'supreme in giving'.

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inner shrine of Siddhisvaram, situated in the northern outer courtyard. In every Siva temple there is a form of Dakshinamurti installed in the southern central niche on the outer wall of the sanctum proper. Dakshinamurti is the manifest form of Siva as the Supreme Guru. The Dakshinamurti in the Siddhisvaram shrine was the favourite deity of our Jnanaprakasa. This day as usual he came to the presence of this Murti, seated himself in front facing east, and went into meditation, expecting the arrival of Jnanasambandha.

In due time, Jnanasambandha reached Siddhisvaram and going round, came into the presence of Dakshinamurti. Here he saw Jnanaprakasa, with peaceful benevolent eyes, countenance radiating grace. He intuitively felt, through the grace of Siva, that this was indeed the guru he was seeking, the one who could dispel the ignorance of his soul and lead him on in the godward path toward final release from all bonds. Like a child that instinctively runs to its mother, like a calf running to its mother cow, like a piece of iron attracted by a magnet, he ran to the seated preceptor and fell at his feet.

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Jnanaprakasa lifted the young man with both hands, gently stroked him and said 'Peace be on you'. His very touch sent an ecstatic thrill through Jnanasambandha and appeased his spiritual hunger and transported him to ethereal heights. Jnanaprakasa then seated him facing north, besltowed his benign look on him, led him through the esotericinitiation ritual called *diksha*, imparted spiritual instructions, and taught him the ritual of Sivalinga puja. In time he introduced him to the doctrines of Saiva Siddhanta, as enunciated in the Sivajnana siddhi.* The disciple was immensely happy that his desire to perform a personal Siva puja was fulfilled so early.

Jnanasambandha was a chosen child of God's grace, and gifted songs flowed from his lips spontaneously from then on. Extolling the grace of Jnanaprakasa, he now sang a song of thirty verses, which has since came to be known as the *Jnanaprakasa malai* (a garland of verses) :

Thou art my only refuge. Thy Grace,
And my own mind know this well.

* Vide Appendix, Note 3.

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Wander wherever I might,
and born however I might be,
Can I forget Thy Grace,
O Lord Jnanaprakasa?

My bonds he severed; my ignorance
He dispelled; he the Lord of Kailas,
Who has now come here at Arur,
As Jnanaprakasa, He made me
Long for the All, Pervasive One.

Resting, awake and jostling about,
The name of Jnanaprakasa I utter,
When hunger and ailment afflict me,
The name of Jnanaprakasa I utter,
Even when inexorable death stalks me,
The name of Jnanaprakasa I utter,
Words else, there are none.

At the same time, he sang also another poem of a hundred verses on Sokkanatha, the *murti* he was to worship thereafter; the poem is known as the *Sokkanatha venba*. It contains a very clear exposition of some of the subtlest concepts of the Saiva Siddhanta system of philosophy. The initiation which he had, had bestowed on him such perfect wisdom and realisation that the three entities

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of Saiva Siddhanta, their mutual relationship, and the ultimate goal of man were so clear to him that the words he now uttered serve to dispel all doubts in the future followers and thinkers. The fulness of the rich experience he was led to have by the one gracious look of the master, he is here sharing with all mankind.

When shall this body drop away from me,
When shall my *karma* and my bonds snap,
When shall my heart dance in the ocean
Of Bliss, O Blissful one, Sokkanatha!

When shall the fattening of this body stop,
When shall the organs in me snap,
When shall my mind experience full
Silence, O my master, Sokkanatha!

No refuge there is for me and no one
to comfort me with kind words;
Thy feet are my only refuge.

O Sokkanatha, the creator of
The universe, the immaculate one
Of Madurai, who dispels all my grief!
Grant me this boon, that I serve Thee,
And forever and ever think of Thee.

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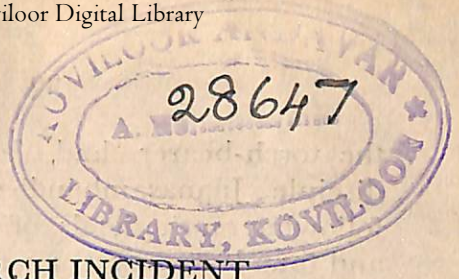

THE TORCH INCIDENT

From then onwards, Jnanasambandha stayed on at Tiru Arur, wholly effacing himself in the service of his master. One incident in such service requires special mention because of the far-reaching effect it had, not only on Jnanasambandha but on the Saiva world in general.

It was the practice of Jnanaprakasa to attend the temple service on the third occasion in the night (usually called the *artha-jama-puja*, midnight worship). Jnanasambandha used to accompany him along with his co-disciples. The service of worship took some time and often it was dark outside the temple, when Jnanaprakasa returned. Hence a torch-bearer usually waited with a torch to light the way to Jnanaprakasa's house, which was some way from the temple. One night in particular, Jnanaprakasa sat in the presence of Dakshinamurti in meditative contemplation much longer than usual. When he was coming out from the temple with his followers, it was past midnight and

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the torch-bearer had fallen asleep. The disciple Jnanasambandha who was closely following on the heels of the master saw this and found here yet another opportunity to serve his master. He stepped forward quickly but did not awaken the sleeping torch-bearer as any one in his position would have normally done. He lifted the burning torch, and holding it high, walked in front of his master, as the torch-bearer had done till this day, lighting the way home.*

Jnanaprakasa, who was walking behind, was deeply immersed in the peaceful presence of the Lord he had just now worshipped outwardly, the memory of which he carried with him, and and so was quite oblivious of all that happened now. He merely walked in the light shed by the torch and followed the torch bearer as usual, and after a few minutes, the party reached his home. 'Stop' he said as usual, and walked into his house. This was the signal for the regular servant to put out his torch and retire, and for the disciples to disperse. But the present torch-bearer, Jnanasambandha, did not remember the

* It should be remembered that a torch-bearer's job is considered to be of a very low order in society, but no such thought entered his mind.

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usual practice. His sub conscious mind was experiencing an inward joy in the service of the master. When the conscious mind heard the order of his master 'stop', he took it merely as an order to him just to stay there. So holding the lighted torch in his hands, he waited. The other disciples departed. He did not notice it. Minutes passed, hours passed; he knew it not; he was not aware of his environment. He went apparently into a mystic trance, a *dhyana samadhi*, where the outward senses ceased to function and the mind only was awake in the full enjoyment of an inward peace. All his outward senses converged into his mind. He did not remember himself, his environment, or the torch held in his hands. As though to reveal the spiritual greatness of Jnanasambandha, there was a heavy downpour of rain. Miracle of miracles! no drop touched him. In time the oil in the torch had burnt itself out; but the flame was not extinguished; the torch continued to burn even without oil! Quite unaware of all these miracles, Jnanasambandha stood on in

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the night* till day break, holding the torch, blissfully happy in an inward peace that he was obeying his master.

Equally so Jnanaprakasa. He did not know that his torch-bearer on this night was his own specially favoured new disciple Jnanasambandha, or that he was then standing outside with a lighted torch in the middle of the night, in pouring rain.

Just at day break, the wife of Jnanaprakasa came out of the house to sweep and clean the portals. As she opened the gates and came out, she was amazed to find her

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* There is a heroic but also tragic parallel to this incident, not on the spiritual but on the material plane, in the story of a little boy by name Casabianca. His father was captain of a ship and the boy accompanied him on board the ship. There was a sea battle. Before going to the battle, the captain had ordered his son not to move from his place. In the battle, the captain was killed and the ship itself was in flames. The boy was standing in his place on the burning deck. The sailors asked him to escape from the ship with them and save himself, but he would not, unless his father called him. Finally the obedient little boy perished in the flames. An English poetess has woven a beautiful lyrical poem out of this incident.

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husband's new disciple standing there, with a lighted torch, untouched by the heavy shower of rain in the night; the rain had fallen all around some yards from him, but not a single drop had fallen on him or on the small circular area around him; even the rain water which had collected and flowed along the street had not touched that area. In speechless wonder, she ran in and told her husband what she saw.

Jnanaprakasa could hardly believe his ears. He came out and saw Jnanasambandha, still there, the torch alight in his hand, rain water rushing along the street, but not a drop of water on his person or on the area around him. Now he could hardly believe his eyes. As he was a realised soul, he took in the situation immediately. So, Siva's Grace had enveloped the young man in the night, had kept his torch burrning, and had kept the rain water from touching him ! With tears of joy and wonder, he embraced Jnana-sambandha the young man, and exclaimed : " My dear Jnanasambandha, you have now been given unparalleled spiritual evolution. You have now grown into a great spiritual master who can shed spiritual lustre and disseminate spiritual knowledge and impart

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solace to suffering mankind. No longer need you stay with us. You may now go forth, and stay at any place you like and there propagate the knowledge of God and give spiritual instruction to such mature souls as come under your influence and thus spread the kingdom of God on earth."

Hearing these words, Jnanasambandha shook with pain at the very thought of separation from his master. He fell at his feet and cried out in agony: "How can I exist when separated from you?

Does any bull or the load on it
have a voice in the transport?
Can I have a voice in what my body
or I should do?
O my Lord Jnanaprakasa of Arur,
Say it, thy will be done."

The implication of Jnanasambandha was that as a servant, he had no independent will except that of acting according to his master's direction.

Jnanaprakasa was very much moved by such words of humility from Jnanasambandha. He had already seen the hand of Providence

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in sending the young man all the way from Madurai to Tiru Arur, to be initiated by him. Now he was able to perceive the same hand of God benevolently extended towards him, for the welfare of all humanity. Some divine will seems to have suggested to him the future place and work of Jnanasambandha. So without hesitation he said:

"Please go north to the celebrated city of Mayuram, two *yojanas** from here. To the north east of that city, you will find a beautiful grove of *vilva* trees. It is known as the *vilvaranya*†. There is in it a small shrine of Siva, called Dharmapuram. In times of yore, Siva bestowed here His grace on Dharmaraja‡, the god of Death, and hence its name. It is a place made holy by the worship of many sages like Agastya. Let that place be your future seat, from which you may hereafter spread your message of Saiva Siddhanta and help struggling souls towards final release from all bonds and union with God."

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* Two yojanas - a distance of about twentyfive miles.

† *Vilvaranya* – forest of *vilva* trees; vilva is botannically the *aegle marmelos* (bael).

‡ Vide Appendix Note 5, Dharmaraja.

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Jnanasambandha, who had wholly surrendered himself to the will of his master, could not now demur. So before agreeing, he asked him: "When am I to have a vision of you again, my master?" Jnanaprakasa answered, "You may go over here every *Guruvara* (Thursday, the day of the planet Jupiter, Guru)." Jnanasambandha had to be satisfied with this permission. So now he wrenched himself as it were from the presence of Jnanaprakasa and left Tiru Arur. Visiting the many important shrines such as Tiru Vanchiyam on the way, he reached Dharmapuram in due time.

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DHARMAPURAM

Dharmapuram is situated a mile to the east of the Mayuranatha shrine of Mayuram, on the southern bank of the river Kaveri. The legends connected with the Kaveri and its succour to the people of the Chola country are legion. Every inch of the ground here had been sanctified by the tours of the Siva shrines undertaken by the Saiva Acharyas in the seventh and the eighth centuries. They had sung the most moving songs in praise of about two hundred Siva shrines there. These songs had inspired the successive emperors of the Chola dynasty, from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries into virtually dotting the land with huge edifices in granite as Siva temples. The city of Mayuram* houses one such grand temple enshrining Siva as Mayura-natha. Dharmapuram was just a small hamlet in those days, set in very picturesque silvan surroundings, ideal for meditation and for religious practices.

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* Mayuram - the place where Sakti in the form of a peacock worshipped Siva; mayura – peacock.

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Arriving here, Jnanasambandha worshipped Dharmapurisvara and His consort Abhayambika.† In course of time, he raised a small hermitage for his stay, to the west of the temple. Here he installed in a suitable place, Sokkanatha, the Sivalinga which he had received at Madurai and into whose worship he was initiated by Jnanaprakasa at Tiru Arur. He performed due worship to this *murti* complete with all the prescribed agamic rituals. The spiritual peace and divine lustre emanating from him gathered innumerable devotees and followers, all ardent seekers of truth and enlightenment. He initiated them into the Saiva order of religion and philosophy and guided them along the path of God. Many are the miracles attributed to him, all performed not through the assertion of the ego, but through the absolute surrender of the ego to the divine will, and through divine intervention. Later on, we shall say a few words about the concept of miracles in that age.

Jnanasambandha radiated love for all creation. Under his spiritual influence, even animals left off their instinctive animosity

† Abhayambika – She who succours those who seek refuge in Her.

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and base nature and lived together in peaceful harmony without harming one another. He had settled in a forest of *vilva* trees. Meek animals like the deer and the cow lived without fear from the wild animals like the tiger. Jnanasambandha's love for God had permeated into such a strata of life also.

As times went on, the sages who were looking after the Dharmapurisvara temple there and performing its various pujas, before the arrival of Jnanasambandha, understood his spiritual eminence. They came to him, taught him many esoteric sciences of which they were masters, and handed over to him for possession and administration the Dharmapurisvara temple, and their own various hermitages. "May you live here long, and may you and your descendants administer the temple and its properties to the best advantage of the Saiva peoples." Thus blessing him, they left the place. Jnanasambandha took over the administration of the temple and arranged for its regular *puja*, festivals and construction, and renovation work.

Staying at Dharmapuram, Jnanasambandha went to Tiru Arur every

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Thursday, to salute his master and derive inspiration from him.

Although he had Jnanaprakasa's permission to go and visit him at Tiru Arur every Thursday, he was feeling the pangs of separation, which he had expressed in many of his songs, subsequently added on to the *Jnanaprakasa malai.*

O Jnanaprakasa, the fountain of Mercy,
Whom the sages see daily to their
hearts' delight,
When am I to have a vision of Your
Lotus feet, and feast my mind thereon ?

O Jnanaprakasa, of Kamalai,
My master, honey like ! you planted
Your lotus feet on my head and made me
Your slave. But now, starved like the
partridge
For the moon beams, I am quite desolate.
Grant me that I am in your presence
always.

Such was his frame of mind. He had no doubt developed into an enlightened master for a large number of followers, but still he

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was always yearning to be in the presence of his own *guru*.

Time passed and the end of Jnana-prakasa had come off suddenly and his soul had gone to eternal rest at the feet of Lord Siva. When Jnanasambandha went to visit him the next time, Jnanaprakasa was no longer there in flesh and blood. His grief at missing his master was inconsolable, but being a realised soul, he got over it and went about performing his duties as usual. At the *samadhi* of Jnanaprakasa he sang a short poem on him, called the garland of nine gems. In one of the verses he sings:

"Out of your mercy you had permitted me to go over to you very Thursday and pray. But now you have dropped your mortal coil. Is it proper that you go away without uttering a word to me? May you deign to speak a word to me now, O Jnanaprakasa!

"I can easily drop this useless body and follow you. But you decided otherwise, and I am reluctant to disobey your wish. O that I should live even after separation from you, my Lord Jnanaprakasa!

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"You have crossed the ocean of births and reached the shore. You have realised fulfilment. But you have stopped me here. I exist merely through your grace. Call me to yourself; teach me the means of reaching you, my Lord Jnanaprakasa !"

At this stage Jnanasambandha had written many metrical treatises on the various aspects of the Saiva system of philosophy. Coming as he does from a direct line of preceptors from Lord Dakshinamurti Himself, and by virtue of his authorship of a number of books on the *kriya, yoga* and *jnana padas* of that system, Jnanasambandha has an important place in the history of Saiva philosophy.

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CHIDAMBARAM

Once Jnanasambandha went to Chidambaram and worshipped there the cosmic dance of Lord Nataraja. After worship, he retired to the thousand-pillared hall and composed himself into a state of prolonged meditation. The external world had ceased to exist, and time itself had stopped. Night followed day in orderly succession but it affected him not. Parasakti, as Sivakamasundari, the consort of Lord Nataraja in the Chidambaram shrine, out of Her infinite mercy as the universal Mother, saw the need to aid his body with physical nourishment, and caused the sweet porridge and milk from Her chamber in the temple to be given to him.

Unthinking persons and persons with a devout frame of mind will accept tales of miracles as quite real and true. Spiritually minded persons will accept that God's grace can work any miracles. But in the modern sceptical world, things are not so easily accepted. Hence a word about miracles

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in general may not be out of place here. We are speaking of an age which existed half a millennium ago. Values in life were quite different in those days. Human society set the greatest score on matters of the spirit. Material values were in a sense non-existent. Hundreds of of enlightened souls and seers had lived purely on the spiritual plane. Their experience and their functioning were on a plane altogether different from the ordinary. The lay people could not aspire to or understand the experience on that plane, but yet they had the greatest veneration for men of such experience. Measured from the ordinary standards, their existence and experience constituted in most cases what in popular parlance was explained as miracles. When the ordinary people were able to see many spiritually evolved souls in their own day to day experience, they set the highest regard for their action, although they could not understand them. When these were not able to explain many aspects of their existence in the higher plane with the criteria of their own living on the material plane, they gave such experiences a new name and called them miracles. Thus we may say that the

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age of Jnansambandha was one in which faith in the miracles swayed the minds of the common people; we need not say anything about the enlightened souls, because they lived that life. It is no wonder therefore that in those ages and in the life of Jnansambandha, many miracles are believed to have really occurred.

No apology is therefore needed for giving an account of the miracles which occurred in the lives of our saints and seers. It is not as though they worked the miracles through any conscious exercise of their ego. In every case we are told that miracles occurred through divine intervention, when the saint concerned had made an absolute surrender of himself to the divine will. And again we may not say, however critical or rationalistic we may like to sound, that miracles had not happened. Many of us have seen before our very eyes many little happenings, often brought about by ordinary individuals, which have no explanation in the realm of reason. In like manner we have to take such instances reported, on trust; on that account they do not cease to be true or appear exaggerated, or become mere flights of the imagination, to be ignored.

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In the world of sound, many things have been wrought by sound. Orpheus charmed by his harp in the Greek legend, and Saint Anayar charmed by his pipe in the Saiva legend, sentient and insentient beings. The serpent is charmed by the snake-charmer's pipe even today. These have been wrought by appeal to the sense of hearing only. But what greater effect could be worked by the Spirit, whose divine peace and influence not only affect all the senses, but go far deeper than they, and touch the mind and through it the spirit itself?

In India in living memory, people had witnessed spiritual miracles performed by saintly souls. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa converted Narendra into a godly way of life and Swami Vivekananda was born. Once more was India placed in its exalted position on the spiritual map of mankind. Still nearer us, Sri Ramana Maharshi had worked miracles with his visitors; although these were not so spectacular, they were yet miracles of far reaching and lasting effect.

In this atomic age, when man has landed on the moon, when the universe itself seems to be shrinking, there are highly

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advanced scientists who feel that all this knowledge is of no avail in understanding the great power which has created an order in all this imponderable immensity, a harmony and beauty amidst all discord and difference, chaos and confusion, without which life would be impossible. They feel that their science is powerless to unravel the mystery of this order and harmony. The higher science advances, the greater it feels its inability to comprehend the hand of that Power.

These thoughts should be in our mind when we seek to evaluate or question the miracles. Man has conquered the elements, but has not conquered himself; neither does he attempt to do it, nor does he go along that path. He tries to conquer the celestial bodies, but does not wish well by his neighbour. Into this world, miracles always introduce an element of awe and wonder, and a message of love and peace.

To continue our narrative. We learn from history that there was hectic activity in the field of religion in the sixteenth century in the whole of Tamil nad. All branches of Hinduism were busy founding

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institutions, writing religious treatises, glorifying temples and temple legends, imparting instruction to followers, and elucidating philosophical doctrines. Saivism had the greatest share in this activity. Enlightened writers had left their impress on religion through their literary activity also. Jnanaprakasa the preceptor of our Jnanasambandha had himself written many manuls and treatises covering all the different pathways to God-realisation such the *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana padas*. He had written also many devotional songs and a *sthala purana* (glorified legends of a local temple). Many of his disciples were prolific writers No wonder his disciple Jnanasambandha also wrote several treatises and religious manuals.

Amidst such intense activity, it is just possible that occasionally religious doctrines were given a twisted interpretation. Jnanasambandha naturally could not help being drawn into a dialectical disputation on that account. There was at this time in Chidambaram, a great scholar by name Marai Jnanasambandha* a senior contemporary of our own Jnanasambandha.

* Vide Appendix Note 4, Marai Jnanasambandha.

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This Marai Jnana had written scores of treatises on the various pathways in Saivism. One of his smaller books was a short treatise named the *Mukti nilai* (state of salvation). On account of one particular position which he had taken in this book in regard to the inherent traits of the soul, he and his book had come in for sharp criticism at the hands of our Jnanasambandha.

Marai Jnana contended that *ananda* or joy was an inherent trait of the soul, just as *sat* and *chit*, being and knowledge, were also its traits; that *mala* or ignorance obstructed the realisation of the soul; that when the obstruction was removed, the soul could enjoy its own bliss; and that this was the *mukti-nilai*, state of salvation. He was a profound scholar and also an enlightened soul. His own preceptors were men of great veneration in the Saiva world and his line of preceptors had also a great following. Hence our Jnanasambandha felt that such a doctrine was not correct and was not conducive to the development and final emancipation of the souls. So he wrote another small treatise of twentytwo verses, called *Mukti nischaya*,* the

* Two commentaries on this text had been written by about 1700 A. D. by Sri Velliambala Tambiran, a disciple of Dharmapuram; one is a short gloss and the other is a large exposition.

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determination of the nature of salvation. Here he established that bliss is not an inherent nature of the soul, the soul had only knowledge and being, that bliss is an attribute of Siva, and not of the soul, and that only when the soul's ignorance or fetters is removed by the grace of Siva, is it able to enjoy *Sivananda* or bliss, which is indeed a bestowal by Siva.

Thus, this little treatise not only gives us an insight into the contemporary currents in Saiva thought, but also gives Jnanasambandha, definite place in the development of the philosophical concepts in Saivism. Hence his name will live in history not merely as the Founder of the Dharmapuram monastery as we shall see later, but also as one who had advanced the Saiva Siddhanta philosophical concepts and enriched its literature by his expository writings.

Jnanasambanha from then onwards came to be known as *Guru* Jnanasambandha, to distinguish him from spiritual leaders of the same name, particularly from this Marai Jnanasambandha, his own contemporary. The first person who illumined this name was Saint Tiru Jnanasambandha, the first of the

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Saiva Samaya acharyas, who lived in the middle of the seventh century at Sirkali. Another Jnanasambandha was Marai Jnana sambandha of Kadandai (latter half of the fourteenth century); he was so called because he was well versed in the Vedas(basic Sanskrit scriptures for all branches of Hinduism). He was the third *acharya* in the line of the Saiva Siddhanta spiritual preceptors from Saint Meikandar. Yet another one was Marai Jnanasambandha, the author of *mukti nilai*, refuted by our own Jnanasambandha. He was a very prolific writer and the Saiva world owes a great debt to him for his many writings. To distinguish our Jnanasambandha from all the above, the term *Guru* was prefixed to his name. This was because he had founded an order of Saivism at Dharmapuram, created a monastery there, and was himself the first preceptor, *Guru*, therein.

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SAMADHI

Guru Jnanasambandha continued to live in this manner at Dharmapuram for a long time. His spiritual attainments attracted to Dharmapuram a large number of seekers after truth, from far and near. His was a life of absolute surrender to God, radiating peace and love to all creation, and helping mature and deserving souls in their onward march towards the final blissful union with God. Finally, he realised that the day of his final union with Siva was approaching. He decided to go into his eternal *samadhi* at the feet of the *Sivalinga* installed by him there. But other things had to be arranged for. His guru Jnanaprakasa had enjoined him to foster the cause of Saiva Siddhanta by instituting a spiritual headship here. The daily worship of Sokkanatha had to be performed. Besides, there was the administration of the local temple which he had taken over from the sages. Many disciples in various stages of enlightenment had gathered round him and were living there;

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they had to be helped further by a spiritual head. Hence he felt the necessity for installing a spiritual successor to look after these several needs and interests.

He selected from among his followers Anandaparavasa as the most spiritually evolved person and as the best fitted to assume the headship of the Dharmapuram *jnanapeeta* (spiritual seat), imparted to him the Supreme knowledge of God. "May you occupy our seat of spiritual headship here, guide deserving souls, perform worship for Sokkanatha and the other temples, and propagate the doctrines of Saiva Siddhanta", he told him. Immediately the anointed him, consecrated him with due rituals and installed him as his successor to the seat. Then he entered into a *jeeva samadhi*.

But Anandaparavasa, who was in reality more highly evolved than the occasion demanded, seems to have already set his heart on total release and oneness with God. So, when he had the final initiation from his master, other things of the world did not matter to him, temple worship or guidance to deserving human souls did not matter. When Jnanasambandha passed

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into a *samadhi*, Ananda cared no more for existence in this world. He prostrated before the *samadhi*, went and stayed at a spot to the west of it, and, in full view of the crown of the temple *vimana* of his master, himself passed into an eternal *samadhi*. His soul, like a bird released from its cage, entered into the most cherished and eternal non-dual union with Siva.

But this was not what Jnanasambandha had planned, or what his followers had desired. They required a spiritual leader to guide them. So they now gathered at the *samadhi* of Jnanasambandha and prayed: "O Lord, now that Anandaparavasa your nominee has also entered eternal bliss, what is to become of us? We pray, you appear again to help us, and to ensure a proper succession to the headship of Dharmapuram, and name a competent spiritual *guru* for us." Through the dispensation of Divine Grace, Jnanasambandha then came out of his *samadhi*, chose Satchitananda another disciple as the next successor, intiated him, anoined him as the next successor and future head, and gave into his hands the worship of Sokkanatha.

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But it transpired that Satchitananda had not the requisite maturity and enlightenment. He was not immediately able to go into a state of *jnana samadhi*, the state of complete identification of the consciousness with God. This naturally caused some concern to Jnanasambandha. He again bestowed his gracious look on Satchitananda and said:

Alas! even after perceiving
The state of Life, Light and Joy into which
Anandaparavasa has merged –
A state which glows without a beginning,
A middle or an end, oneness has not
Dawned on you. Is it from attachment,
Or because the bonds, *anava*, *karma*
And *maya* have not been annulled?
Has not the Supreme Knowledge
dawned on you?
Tell us, how is your vision so clouded?

These words of the master produced the the desired result. Satchitananda realised the state of *jnana samadhi*. Jnanasambandha was now happy. He instructed him again to assume the spiritual headship of the Dharmapuram seat, to perform the various worships in the temples, and spread the

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knowledge of the Saiva Siddhanta doctrines among the disciples and in the wider world. Then he entered into his final *samadhi* of eternal non-dual union with Siva, on the seventh day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Vaikasi* (May-June).

Thus Satchitananda was the third pontiff of the place, which has since come to be known as the Dharmapuram Adhinam. An unbroken line of enlightened preceptors adorned the headship from the days of Guru Jnanasambandha right upto this day. The present head of the Adhinam is Sri Shanmukha Desika Paramacharya, the twentysixth in the line.

The *samadhi* of Jnanasambandha had subsequently been built up into a grand temple in granite and it is now called the Jnanapuriswara temple. It has all the usual courtyards, corridors, halls and sub-temples, usually associated with a Siva temple proper. Daily, periodical and seasonal worship and festivals are conducted in the temple as laid down in the agamas. The belief is that Guru Jnanasambandha still dwells in this temple and continues to guide the successive heads of the Adhinam.

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THE ADHINAM

Such in brief is the story of Guru Jnanasambandha, the enlightened founder of the Dharmapuram Adhinam, his writings and his founding of the institution. In the long line of successors to the headship of the adhinam, there have been many enlightened seers who advanced the Saiva faith by their example, precept, writing and administration.

A few words may be said of some of the illustrious preceptors in the line. The fourth was Masilamani desika from whom Kumaragurupara of Sri Vaikuntam received spiritual instruction. Kumara gurupara went up to Banaras in the north, mastered the Hindustani language, and won the admiration of the Muslim deputy of the Delhi Mughal emperor through his masterly religious discourses in that language. He founded in Banaras the Kumaraswami mutt on the banks of the Ganges, which is still flourishing. Kumara gurupara is one of the most famous and popular figures in the Tamil literary

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history of the seventeenth century. He lived in the days of Tirumalai Nayak, ruler of Madurai till 1659. He has written eleven poems of exquisite literary beauty. One of the poems is in praise of his guru, Mailamani desika of Dharmapuram, mentioned above. The Kumaraaswami mutt founded by him at Banaras was shifted to Tiruppanandal in the next century and it is still flourishing there. The sixth in the line was Tiru Jnana-sambandha desika who imparted instruction to Sambandha Saranalaya, author of the famous shorter *Skanda purana* in Tamil. Legends say that the ruler of Mysore admired him and gave him many presents. The next was Tiru Ambala Desika, who wrote the Sanskrit manual, *Varnasrama chandrika*, intended to inform the ruler of the land that spiritual preceptors transcended the Vedic caste barriers. Padikkasu, famous us a versatile poet in the eighteenth century, was a disciple unter the ninth pontiff Tirunavukkarasu desika. The tenth in the line was Sivajnana desika, who made a pilgrimage to Banaras and there sang several devotional hymns on the deities enshrined in the temple there.

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The present head of the Dharmapuram mutt is His Holiness Sri Shanmukha Desika Paramacharya, twentysixth in the holy line from Guru Jnanasambandha. He is an erudite scholar in the Tamil language and literature, as well as in the Saiva Siddhanta sastras and religious books. Having been in charge of the Dharmapuram religious centre at Madras for a large number of years, he has been widely known in the Tamil country and beyond. Both by his deep learning and austere habits, and by his pleasing words, he has endeared himself to all the Saivas and the others in the land and earned their love and reverence.

It is noteworthy that some important temples in the Tamilnad continue to be administered by the Dharmapuram Adhinam even today. The spiritual eminence of the successive heads of the Adhinam after Guru Jnanasambandha was having greater and greater recognition. As years rolled by, devout people all over the Tamilnad had been drawn to the monastery by the spritual illumination imparted by the successive heads. The heads were by rule required to be celibate ascetics and so people from many places seem to have felt that the

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temples in their own places would be better administered and maintained by the heads of the Adhinam who were self less and dedicated ascetics and spiritually evolved *jnanis*. Thus twentyseven temples had been transferred to the Adhinam by people arround the area in the belief that administation by such spiritual minded persons would be to the advantage of the Saiva Community at large. We shall mention here some of the more important of them.

Saint Jnanasambandha, the first samaya acharya of the Saivas, was born in Sirkali and he attained beatitude in a place called Nallurperumanam (now Achalpuram). It is remarkable that the shrines in these two places, Sirkali and Nallurpperumanam are now being administered by the Dharmapuram Adhinam, whose founder we know was another Jnanasambandha. Tiru Aiyaru, where Saint Appar was vouchsafed a vision of Kailas, is also under this Adhinam. Of the eight shines famed in legend as the places where the might of Lord Siva came into display, namely the *Asta-viratta* shrines, three are administered by this Adhinam; Tiru Kadavur where the fear of Yama the god of death was removed, Tiru Korukkai

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where the power of Kama the Indian Cupid was destroyed, and Tiru Pariyalur where the might of Daksha who slighted Siva was vanquished. Vaithiswarankoil famed in the Tanjavur district for its Subramanya shrine, where the eagles Sampati and Jatayu of the Ramayana fame worshipped, the Tirup-panandal temple where Lord Siva inclined his head to receive a floral wreath from a young girl, and the Tiru Nallaru temple which is held specially important to Sani (Saturn) the planet which is said to exercise a baneful influence on the human beings, are some of the other temples administered by the Adhinam. The large temple at Tirubhu-vanam in the Tanjavur district built by the Chola emperor Kulothunga III is also under this Adhinam; this is dedicated to Sri Sarabhamurti, a mystical form of Siva, half animal and half bird, who manifested himself in order to calm down the ferocity of Narasimhamurti, the *avatara* of Lord Vishnu, after he killed the Asura King, Hiranya Kasipu.

The other temples are minor and major ones with varying degrees of importance.

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The Adhinam has been publishing the Saiva canonical books, the Saiva sastras, manuals written by its own heads and disciples, and other literature and has thus been helping the development of the Saiva religion and Tamil literature.

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THE WORKS OF GURU JNANA SAMBANDHA

Jnanasambandha is considered to have written eight small poems in Tamil. All of them have been printed. We shall briefly notice them here.

Sokkanatha kalitturai is the first poem sung by him. The occasion was his finding the Sivalinga in the golden lotus tank of Madurai, under Siva's direction given to him in a dream. The poem contains 11 verses in praise of Sokkanatha of Madurai, in the *kalitturai* metre. Here he bemoans his own unfitness and extolls the Lord's boundless mercy, in condescending to bestow His grace on him.

Jnanaprakasa malai is the next. Part of this poem was sung by him when he was initiated into the personal ritualistic worship of Sokkalinga by his preceptor; part of it consists of verses sung by Jnanasambandha on various occasions later and added on to

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the original work. The poem is in praise of Jnanaprakasa and contains 33 verses in the *kalitturai* metre. Here he says that it is the Supreme Lord Himself who came to him in the form of Jnanaprakasa and declares that he has no independent existence except the one of serving his master.

Sokkanatha venba was sung when he was taught the worship of Sokkalingam by his master. This contains now 100 verses in the *venba* metre in praise of that *murti*. Some of the verses are said to have been sung by him during his daily worship of Sokkanatha; they had been added to the original poem later on. The poem contains some very subtle thoughts of the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, couched in the most simple language.

Navaratna malai is a short poem of nine verses sung by Jnanasambandha, when his guru Jnanaprakasa had taken eternal rest at the feet of the Lord. (Navaratna-nine gems.) This is also in the *kalitturai* metre.

Dasa karya ahaval is a highly technical poem of three verses in the *asiriyappa* metre, containing in all 136 lines. This deals with the ten stages of realisation in regard to the three

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entities *pasa* (bonds), *pasu* (the soul) and *Pati* (God); it is bound to be wholly obscure to the novice.

Parasada shadgam is a poem of seven verses in the long *viruttam* metre and is a translation of a Sanskrit text of the same name. *Prasada* is a peculiar yoga path, which is special to Saiva Siddhanta. It consists of taking the soul through the sixteen stages called *kalas* and of attaining final oneness at the end of the *kala* experience. The poem will indeed be obscure to one who has not gone along the path.

Mukti nischayam has been described in the text. It is a poem of 22 verses in the *venba* metre. It is a refutation of the concept of *mukti* as stated by Marai Jnanasambandha. Two cammentaries on the book had been written by 1700 A. D. by Sri Velliambalavana Tambiran, a disciple of Dharmapuram; one is a short gloss and the other is a large exposition, with endless quotations from the agamic and other Sanskrit texts.

Siva bhoga saram is the most famous and popular of the writings of the author. Several editions of the book has been

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published in the last century, by persons unconnected with Dharmapuram. The term signifies that it is the expression of the essence of God-experience.

The *Sivabhogasaram* along with the earlier *Jnanaprakasa malai* lays a special emphasis on the need for a spiritual guide or *guru*. This emphasis was already there in the Saiva canon. The *Tiru mantiram* speaks of it very elaborately. We know Saint Manikkavachakar had his initiation under Siva Himself, who came down as his guru. Scriptures say that Siva himself comes down on earth as the guru for the least evolved souls. Guru Jnanasambandha in all his writings, particularly in these two books, re-states the concept of the *guru*. It is but fitting therefore that he himself was asked by his own *guru* to be the head of a line of spiritual preceptors, for a long time to come. The present poem consists of 139 verses in the *venba* metre. It is the outcome of the author's experience of a non-dual union with God, where he had severed all the bonds and has immersed himseif in the ocean of eternal bliss. It is rare for a realised soul to pour forth its God-experience in words, but Guru Jnanasambandha has perhaps done this

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because he had undertaken the task of founding a holy order at Dharmapuram, and taken upon himself the responsibility to evolve a line of spiritual preceptors for the guidance of all mankind.

Jnanabharana vilakkam is an ambitious work on the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, expository and dialectical in character. Here he had taken the *Sivajnana siddhi* of Arulnandhi sivam (the second of the *santana acharyas*) and elaborated it by interweaving new verses into the text. It should have been a very large treatise, but unfortunately, except for a few fragments, the entire work seems to have been lost. It had the benefit of an elaborate gloss from Velliambalavana Tambiran, a learned disciple of the fourth pontiff of the Adhinam; part of the gloss has been published.

All the above books, to the extent available, have been published by the Adhinam.

BENEDICTION

Blessed be the Heavens,
Blessed be the Vedas and the Agamas,
Blessed be the Lord and His shrines

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Blessed be the Saiva Religion
the Sacred Ash and the Rudraksha,
Blessed be the sacred order
of the spiritual masters,
By the Grace of Jnanasambandha
of Dharmapuram.

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SAYINGS
OF
JNANASAMBANDHA

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SAYINGS OF GURU JNANASAMBANDHA

Guru Jnanasambandha has sung in all 334 verses in the eight poems mentioned above. Ten verses in the *Dasakarya ahaval* and the *Prasada shadgam* are highly metaphysical and mystical in import. Excluding these, the other verses, numbering about 324, contain some very fine devotional and religious thoughts in the Tamil language. Often there is no clear dividing line between emotional outburst and philosoplical expression. A vein of supplication to the guru and through him an absolute surrender to the Supreme Will runs through all the poems. The author had felt the guidance of the Divine Hand early in his spiritual career and this influence is clearly discernible in all his sayings. He belongs to the small group of world teachers raised to lofty heights of spiritual experience early in life by the visitation of God. He stands out as a unique figure, not only by the visitation of God, but by his coming in a great spiritual line in Tamilnad, handing down the rich and

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ancient legacy of Saiva Siddhanta, by his many songs of prayer and philosophy, and also by his founding a spiritual line of instruction through his disciples. Some of the lines in his songs have passed into the lore of proverbs in Tamil and this will indicate the popularity which his songs have had among the Saiva peoples in the land, in the past centuries.

In the following pages are given the substance in translation of some of his thoughts, selected from the various poems.

ON HIS GURU

In Saivism, as in every other branch of Hinduism, the spiritual preceptor is considered as the manifest form of the Supreme Being. Out of Its infinite mercy, that Being had taken the form of Kamalai Jnanaprakasa in order to redeem Guru Jnanasambandha and also humanity at large.

He is the Supreme Lord, my Master,
Jnanaprakasa of Kamalai
The dispenser of success and of love,
And of knowledge to perceive the Truth,
And the bestower of bliss.

Jnanaprakasa the transcendant Lord, has now hoisted the banner of redemption: why

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worry and suffer? Ignore the false guidance of the others, and hasten to the presence of his lotus feet.

They, that bow at the feet or Jnana-prakasa, have no fear of death; the creator does not give them future births. Hence, have no fear, you can live happy and be enveloped in bliss.

I perceived Jnanaprakasa of Kamalai
whose bower drips honey-
Him with the golden lotus feet.
My bonds fell off,
And nectar I drank,
Immersed in blissful estasy.

Need you perform penances by standing on the top of hills in the hot sun? Jnana-prakasa redeems his devotees whoever they be. Therefore, call yourselves his servants: that is enough to remove your births.

Ethical conduct who shall know,
And realisation and release,
The path of penances and of love
Who shall follow, had not
Jnanaprakasa the Supreme Lord
Come to us in human form?

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Just as hard earth is levelled, weeded, made soft and sown with sweet paddy, so also the grace of Jnanaprakasa softened my hard intellect, taught me in a relishable manner the nature of the bonds, the nature of grace, and the nature of perfect bliss.

The feet of Jnanaprakasa are to me my father and mother, my kin, the object of my enjoyment, the external world, my body and my mind, and my soul's soul.

When I understood the teaching of Jnanaprakasa, I perceived that all else was mere delusion. I merged into his ocean of bliss, and retained the feeling of bliss in my heart, without any consciousness thereof; I became that bliss: this is indeed perfect release.

The fragrant feet* of Jnanaprakasa bestows a flood of joy on those that show even a little devotion to him: but those deceitful persons who have no love and who think one thing and do another, they consign to lowly births.

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* 'feet' is always symbolic of God's grace.

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We care not who hates us,
Or who jeers at us:
Jnanaprakasa dwells in our heart
And showers therein a blissful experience.
We can have no more births,
And our joy will be eternal.

The true followers of Jnanaprakasa study the nature of the three entities in Saivam – *Pati*, *pasu* and *pasam*; after realising, them, they spurn all this worldly life; they cease from the worries of learning; and finally they immerse themselves in the ocean of bliss of Siva, in a non-dual union.

GOD-EXPERIENCE

Jnanasambandha was a fully realised soul. His stay at Dharmapuram was under the orders of his master, and for the welfare of humanity. From the moment Jnanaprakasa instructed Jnanasambandha the latter was experiencing an unceasing torrent of joyous God-experience. Experience of bliss is always beyond words. Occasionally we get an insight into it in Jnanasambandha's words.

It is the heat that scalds,
and not the iron.
It is Thy glorious Grace that
allots the gods their functions,
O Lord Sokkanatha, the immutable.

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My Lord Sokkanatha,
Thou dost not abide in those
Who are one with matter and
with the ego.
But abidest as the Supreme Bliss itself
In the hearts of those
Who get immersed in that Bliss.

Thou art the treasure house of mercy,
the blessed for some of
Thine devotees,
Thou art the pleasurable joy
Ever present in my intellect,
O Lord Sokkanatha.

What use bathing, what use
Worshipping with flowers?
What avail visiting shrines?
Only the firm hold of the heart
Will help the soul to attain Thy Feet.

Do not worry about the real principles in
metaphysics.
Let me tell you what they are:
They are the expressions of *maya*,
Which are responsible to hold you

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From identifying yourself with Siva,
The source of all joy.
Oh my master, that delights in giving!

How hast thou entered my mind, melting my heart, consuming my body, and causing a flood of joy to overflow, and reveal the bonds as unreal!

Whatever I may do,
Whatever I may say,
Whatever I may contemplate,
When through Thy grace I realise
That everything is Thine own work,
Then my Lord, mine I perceive not.

Ere I was able perceive
The ineffable grace of the Lord,
I sought for His feet everywhere
And grew weary, not realising
I was resting at the feet all the time.

We enjoy the abundance of Siva.
United in the All-pervasive
We exist everywhere,
And not merely in the material world.

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We exist without an end
We bow at the feet of the great sages
Who have realised Siva:
Who is our equal?

I may pray to Thee for anything,
Only if Thy grace does not stand
by me.
But since Thou art with me always,
And directest me, how am I the doer
Either for good or for bad?

If the Lord who is All Bliss and All Intelligence, Himself pervades everything, matter and sentient beings, who then is great and who is small, who is a friend and who a foe?

Could I realise Thee through my own effort,
Then, would I remain in this misery
Thus long, O Sokkanatha of Madurai?

My thoughts are deceitful,
My words are false, and
My deeds are fradulent:
If Thou directest the three organs
In this manner, O Sokkanatha,
When am I to obtain release?

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I have not yet got rid of
delusion and desire;
And love of the physical body
not yet overcome;
Alas! the bonds have not yet snapped
even after I had attained you,
O Lord Sokkanatha of Madurai!

My heart dwells on naught else
But Thee, O Lord. But yet,
Thou hast not thought fit to dispel
The darkness lurking in me. I have not
Apparently performed the least of penances.
What exactly is missing in my effort
To attain you, my Lord Sokkanatha?

Who is so fortunate as I?
Thou didst appear before me, and
Taught me the real sense
of the Upanishads, the crown of the Vedas
Rare to comprehend by any,
O Lord Sokkanatha!

Sokkanatha is called the Siddha who can perform any miracle. The author in a lighter vein questions this title and himself supplies the answer.

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My Lord of Madurai, Thou wouldst bless only those who Love Thee, but not those who are hard-hearted. How then art Thou called the All-Powerful Siddha ?

But now I know; none there is hard bound in bondage as myself; but yet, Thou hast accepted this loveless me also as Thy slave. Thou art indeed the All-Powerful Siddha, O blissful Lord of Madurai.

Thou art the perfection that gathers
Over the clouds of knowing and joy,
Where desires die out,
Darkness vanishes, and
The body itself melts away,
O Lord Sokkanatha.

Those who overcome their desires get over their limited knowledge, and their own great attainments, and forget the self and are able to stay in the state of eternal bliss, without any consciousness of the physical body:

Who can equal them ?

If the Soul has joy as its inherent faith, will it pass through the endless births and

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deaths? If the eyes have the lustre of the sun, will they not be able to see through darkness?

It is false to say that, apart from the supreme joy existing in God, there is also joy inherent in the soul; the only joy the soul can have is a realisation of the joy in God; there is nothing else but the darkness of ignorance.

The state of salvation according to the Siddhanta as defined in the Agamas is the release from the inherent bonds and the merging in the bliss of Siva.

ON KARMA

Every soul that is born performs some action. In accordance with the attachment of the soul to the action, *karma* or fruits of action accrue. No one can escape this cycle of action and *karma*. God links *karma* to the respective souls, through successive births. The enlightened man ceases to get attached to the action, but imagines it is all God's will.

If it is really God who through His grace, causes each to act according to his own *karma*, why then do you judge others as the good or the bad? O my heart, consider everything as God's will.

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The Grace of the Lord
Who dances in Tillai –
Where it will lead me,
Where it will drop me,
Where it will place me,
I do not know.

Day dawns when the hours of darkness are over, and night closes in when the hours of the day are over. Realize this, O my heart. When the time is ripe, all actions bear fruit; and when the time is not, they simply become void.

The bonds are insentient;
The soul will not cling by itself to the bonds,
Thou linkest the two, my Lord,
And dost start the cycle.
But if Thou dost not redeem the soul,
How then can the soul get release?

Let me assure you, my heart, if you are destined to enjoy certain things, then that *karma* will certainly get hold of you and feed you that enjoyment. Hence do not go about asking for this or that. Stay quiet, keeping the Lord of Tillai in your heart.

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The Lord binds with the threads of *karma*, this body which is like a wooden doll, and makes it perform good and bad acts. O the absurdness of the ignorant people who do not realise this but call it their own work !

The Lord knows what *karma* is to be linked, to whom, at what place and time, in what manner, and through what agency. Knowing this, he does link the particular *karma* at the particular time and place, through the particular means and manner without the least omission.

Canst Thou not in your infinite mercy,
Bestow bliss
On my intelligence, my Lord ?
Why should Thou slowly make me suffer
Mortify me through evil *karma*
And then bestow realisation on me ?

The body and its ailments,
And the good and the bad,
Do they, attach themselves to us,
Without any cause ?

Siva's grace relates them to us,
In accordance with our action in the past
Know this and set your heart on Him.

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Uniting the body to you,
And separating it from you,
Making you act and then cease,
Enlightening you and obscuring you,
Remember, all these accord
With pre-ordained *karma*.

People are born, each according to his *karma*. People derive experience each according to his *karma*. Who has helped whom and who has not? The sages always think of Knowing themselves.

ON THE INSTRUCTION OF THE GURU

The spiritual instruction imparted by Jnana-prakasa had evolved Jnanasambandha into a spiritual leader. All his songs reveal the influence of the master. Some of the direct references to the master's advice are colleted below.

If thou wouldst reach the Supreme
Whom the mind reaches not,
Stay firm in the state where
The day or the night exist not;
Repudiate all that is perceived,
As not this and not this, and
Rid yourself of the three bonds-
So taught my master.

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I am the intelligence, and
The joy arising therein is Siva.
That which obscures me from perceiving
My own nature, is the bondage.
They are the liberated,
who realise this state,
So taught my master.

The relationship of mother, father and kin is all a delusion. Thou didst consider thy body as thyself. Now hast thou realised that all this is mere delusion and that the supreme bliss is the only real.

When the lips utter fire, does it burn?
When the lips say butter, milk,
honey or sugar
Do the lips taste sweet?
Therefore, if you just say Iam Brahman,
Do you become Brahman?
Realise the Brahman in you,
Through the grace of the master.

I pervade thine intelligence and exist as thee. If thou canst merge thyself in me for ever and remain as I, then there is nothing more to be done for ending thy cycle of births.

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Where vanity, evil thought arrogance, anger, attachment, and desire are not overcome, it is indeed hard, very hard to lose oneself in eternal union with God's Grace.

Discarding vanity, getting over the limited knowledge of the soul, renouncing this world whose existence in just like a flash of lightning, despising the physical body, and uniting with Siva if this could be achieved, that is the day when the cycle of births ceases.

Where words fail and thoughts stop,
Where the veil of *maya* is removed,
There will dawn realisation of the Self.
It is a myth to say reading scriptures
Mountain high, praising with the lips
And worshipping through action,
Will take us to Him.

Can you perceive the Supreme Unknown,
Oh my timid and foolish heart,
By crying hoarse with your throat,
Day and night?

Studying millions of scriptures, and attaining great powers through various

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penances will not confer peace of the soul to those who cannot stay by the Grace of the Guru unperturbed.

The Truth may be taught only to those in whom great love has evolved, preception has dawned thereon, and the will to wipe out painful *karma*, and where there is the thirst for realising perfect bliss.

Like the fire in the wood
And heat in the water,
Like the sweet taste in honey,
Like the fragrance in the blossom,
Like ether in the air,
And vision in the eye,
Even so in the liberated state,
God and the soul stand together,
In eternal non-dual union.

ON PRAYER

The Sivabhogasaram is an expression of the rich experience of God which Guru Jnanasambandha had and so it does not have any line of prayer. The other poems have many lines of prayer, uttered on different occasions. The following are some of the prayerful lines written by him.

Expel the fiend of desire in my mind,
To give place to ineffable realisation,
O Sokkanatha, Lord of Supreme Bliss.

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Appear to me through some one,
Abide in my intellect and enlighten me,
Manifest Thyself as the Lord, and
Illumine me on earth,
to my heart's content,
Omy mother, Sokkanatha.

Ever abide in me, O immaculate One,
Guide my intellect and remove the
Delusions in my mind and unite me
With the All-blissful and All-perfect,
My Lord Sokkanatha.

If thou enlightenest me, I can then see light. If thou dost not, I cannot see light even for a moment. Enlighten me then, my Lord Sokkanatha, annul all my bonds and confer on me eternal bliss.

I know not, O Sokkanatha,
What *karma* awaits this humble me,
What *karma* Thy grace shall cause
To be done through my person,
What *karma* shall accrue to me in
the future.
But whatever my future be,
Bestow Thy grace on me.

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When the sorrows of life afflict me, I call to you a hundred times: is it fair that you do not respond, you who suckled the distressed litter like their own mother swine?*

A mother cannot bear to see the suffering of her child. Can you bear to see my sufferings in this birth, although these are the result of my own *karma*?

My Lord, art Thou not the righteous King who ruled justly over Madurai? How is it that my forlorn cry of agony does not reach Thine ears?

I am not a fervent devotee,
Nor am I impeccable;
A covetous person I am, devoid of the
least love.
But my Lord Sokkanatha,
Shower on me Thy Infinite mercy,
Cause me to see myself, to realise Thee
And nurture me in the cradle of joy.

My Lord of Madurai, the Supreme
Intelligence,
The Lord of all souls and my own master,

* This is a sport of the Lord at Madurai.

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Grant me this boon that my lips always
Lisp Thy prayer, my heart contemplates
on Thee,
And my body bows in salutation to Thee.

Not the least love for Thee
Do I possess; yet
Daily do I utter Thy name
Before Godly men and say
Thou art my only refuge
And that I am Thy servant.
In Thine infinite mercy,
Forgive me this falsehood,
O my mother, Jnanaprakasa.

My Lord, Thou hast taken me
As Thy servant, but yet Thy Grace
Thou hast not bestowed on me.
People will taunt me, were I
To end my life. Realise this,
My master, and admit me as Thy servant.

If a mother seeks to harm her child,
who can help it?
If Thou the Supreme guru
Dost propose to adandon me,
How am I to have realisation?
Bestow Thine Grace on me, my Lord.

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Four are the helps to man –
The mother, father, the teacher and God.
Thou hadst shown that Thine lotus feet
Are all these four for me. But if now
Thou shouldst neglect me,
What can I say, O the immaculate One?

Take pity on me, My Lord,
Who am much distressed by the fivefold
Taints of my soul; my sense organs
Have made me timid. Bestow on me
Thy golden feet, O Lord Sokkanatha.

Even if Thou dost not bestow
Thy grace on me now,
But placest me in births
suited to my *karma*
Please stay inseparable
with me in those births
My Lord Sokkanatha.

HIS MESSAGE

All that has been said so for is no doubt Guru Jnanasambandha's message. Yet, there are many thoughts which he utters in a bold yet cryptic language. Some of them are couched in the most simple languge, which has an appeal both to the masses as well as to the evolved souls.

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Lose not thyself in the pleasures of life,
In the bonds of family and children.
Lose thyself in Him, perceive Him
Without a limited consciousness,
Be united with Him and
Let him be your ornament.

The scriptures say that those who suppress themselves are the great and the those who call themselves great are indeed small. These small people carry the greatest burden of suffering.

Let not desires pursue thee,
Renounce them and set they heart
On the Supreme. Realise that the world
Is all a myth.

What does it signify
    if the whole world
Waits for our favour?
What does it signify
    if the whole world is ours,
If the whole world extolls us?
We can attain salvation
Only if we cut asunder
The cluster of *karmas*,
And delight in the enjoyment of bliss.

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Tell me when will the births stop?
Will they stop if you are infatuated
With knowledge or
if you are inseparably one
With the Supreme Bliss, which is
Beyond your preception and
beyond any definition?

Any quarter, any area of enjoyment,
Any deed, or any consequence
Is not eternal. These are like the
Images in a mirror, only seen by the mind
And vanishing in no time.
Consider them as objects
Seen a mirror or in a dream.

Any amount of learning, any amount of instruction, and any amount of achievement will not bring joy, when all this wordly life appears real, and fails to manifest its unreal nature.

Do not be deluded by your nation, place, name and land, by riches, rank and class, but realise Him who is all love and ever present in your intelligence.

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To the sages that have overcome delusion, the body is a thing to be discarded. To them the Almighty is the only refuge.

When you esteem yourself to be high, consider the riches of those greater than you. When you consider yourself poor, think of those who are humbler than you. Thus let not sorrow and suffering ever cloud your mind.

They mingle not with the ignorant,
Who extoll the fleeting as the permanent.
But they will maintain a silence,
Will immerse themselves in Siva, and
Get over their bonds and enjoy bliss.

They know not themselves,
They know not their Master,
They know not the functioning of their
past *karmas*.
But they go about, alas,
Calling themselves prophets.

What is the purpose of learning and the great difficulties undergone for that? Is it to engage in disputation with the learned and bark? Is it not to become servants to God and to conquer the mind?

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States ruled by the unjust,
Penances performed without
Putting on the sacred ash on the brow,
The preceptor who has not received
Grace from the Supreme perfect Light,
And the austerities of the uninitiated –
Ignore these as profitless.

Whatever thou mayst see with thy senses,
Whatever anyone may say,
Whatever likes or dislikes may be received,
Oh my mind, do not be worry,
Decide after due enquiry.

Oh my mind, be not agitated
Repeatedly I tell you, enquire into
Everything; never wish evil to anyone,
Never forget good done to you.
Never be depressed.

The Lord, the souls, and the bonds,
And the five functions of Siva's grace
They all exist eternally.
And Lord Siva is always the just,
But why are a few enveloped in grace,
Some are in hell,
Some on the earth,
And some in the heavens ?

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Sokkanatha,
ever present in Madurai,
Grant me this boon that never
into my mind
Shall enter the disire for woman
and land and gold.

The author has a word to say to those who are perturbed over the trend of the changing twinces which seeks to uproot existing traditions and values. We should remember, he lived in a period when the Tamil ruling dynasties had ceased to exist, and the entire country, not only the Tamilnad, was under a muslim yoke. Religion and religious institutions suffered heavily at that period. He realised this and was naturally sad. But yet, he has re-emphasized a faith in God, who knew what was best.

My Lord! The Siva temples are in great peril. Shall I blame the ruler of the land for this plight, or shall I blame You, You who only feed the fruits of our own past *karma?*

But let us not despair. We may consider our temples and religion to be in peril only if we concede that our Lord is weak. It is He who creates and destroys. Why should we reproach the others?

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Thou dost not give up desires,
Thou dost not give up passions,
Thou dost not perform Siva pooja,
Thou dost not meditate with love,
On the five letters of Siva,
Thou hast not conqured anger,
Thou dost not chant the hymns;
Oh my mind!
With what face can you talk?

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APPENDIX

Note 1. Meikandar (page 5)

The Tamil term Meikandar is practically a translation of the name Satya-jnana-darsini, meaning one who had realisation of the Supreme Truth. Legends say that Meikandar had his initiation from Sage Paranjoti at the early age of three. He wrote the first manual of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy known as the Siva Jnana bodham, consisting of twelve short aphorisms with eightyone explanatary notes in verse, in the Tamil language. This book is the first and basic text for the Saiva Siddhanta system. According to the Saiva tradition, the line of spiritual headship from Meikandar is also known as the Meikanda *paramparai.*

We had seen that after Meikandar, Saints Arulnandi, Marai Jnanasambandha and Umapati were the spiritual heads or acharyas in succession as master and disciple. After Saint Umapati, the headship went to Arulnamasivaya, who was also known as Machu-

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chettiyar. From him the headship passed on to Gangai Meikandar, Chitrambala nadi, Sambandha munivar, Sivapuram Jnanaprakasa, Sivapuram Tattuvaprakasa, Chettitheru Jnanaprakasa, Kamalai Jnanaprakasa, and lastly Guru Jnanasambandha, the founder of the Dharmapuram Adhinam.

Note 2. Jnanaprakasa of Kamalai (page 23)

Kamalai Jnanaprakasa is a well known figure in the Tamil literatry field as well as in the religious field. Kamalai is Lakshimi, the goddess of prosperity and the consort of Vishnu. Legends say that she worshipped Siva at Tiru Arur and hence her name is associated with the place which came to be called Kamalai. The large temple tank at Tiru Arur also takes its name from Lakshmi and is called the Kamalalaya. This Jnanaprakasa came in the direct line of disciples from Siva at Kailas, as we have shown in previous paragraph. He had written many valuable religious treatises on all the aspects of Saivism - *charya*, *kriya*, *yoga* and *jnana* and has besides written a *sthala purana* also. Besides Guru Jnanasambandha, he had many disciples, some of whom had also written religious as well as literary books.

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There is literary as well as inscriptional evidence to show that Kamalai Jnanaprakasa flourished by 1561-6. Hence his date may be fixed as between 1525 and 1575. Guru Jnanasambandha may therefore be considered to have lived between 1550 and 1600.

Note 3. Sivajnanashiddhi (page 28).

Tradition says that when Jnanaprakasa initiated Jnanasambandha into the doctrines of Saivism and instucted him in Siva puja, he taught them to him through an exposition of the Sivajnana Siddhi. This is an elaborate Tamil philosophical treatise on Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, written by Saint Arulnandi, the second of the four Santana acharyas. It consists of two parts, the first being an examination of the various systems of philosophy, and the second planned as a systematic exposition of the Siddhanta philosophy. The second part is one of the main basic texts of the system. It contains 328 quatrains and has been written as a kind of metrical commentary on the Siva Jnanabodham of Saint Meikandar, the first of the Santana acharyas. In a verse in his Sivabhogasaram, Guru Jnanasambandha himself extolls the Siddhi.

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"Half a verse in the Siddhi is sufficient for those who would examine all the books of the world in order to attain salvation by scorching their three impurities, matter, the *anavamala* (the ego), and *karma*."

This reference by Guru Jnanasambandha certainly justifies the tradition.

Note 4. Marai Jnanasambandha (page 50).

This writer was a senior contemporary of Guru Jnanasambandha. He was a great scholar in Sanskrit and in Tamil and had written about twenty religious treatises in Tamil and one in Sanskrit also. Not willing to see the ills and the evils prevalent in the world, he is said to have lived blind-folded. He also hailed from the line of disciples in the spiritual line after Saint Umapati and he had besides a number of disciples, some of whom had written religious treatises and commentaries. He had lived in Chidambaram.

Note 5. Dharmaraja (page 37).

Yama is the God of Death in all Hinduism. His duty is to seize the souls at the end of their allotted span of life on earth and reward or punish them according to the

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nature of their action here. Markandeya was a brahmin boy, destined to die at the age of sixteen. But to overcome death, he was performing *Sivapuja* in a place called Tiru Kadavur. When his days were over, Yama sent his messengers to seize the soul of the boy. But they were repulsed by the forces of Siva, who had appeared before him to take his soul to Kailas, the abode of Siva, on that day. Yama immediately hurried to the place. When he went to Markandeya he found the boy performing *puja* to Siva. But Yama would not wait even for the *puja* to be completed. In his impatience and conceit, he cast his noose around both Markandeya and the Sivalinga he was worshipping. When the Lord felt the noose, He came out of the Linga in order to protect his devotee and kicked Yama to death. But when Yama prayed for forgiveness, Siva relented; in order that the function of Yama should proceed unhindered on earth, he directed him to go to Dharmapuram and worship and resume his duties. Yama accordingly did so. The place where he worshipped was thence forth known as Dharmapuram. Forgiveness was granted to him in this place.

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The duty of taking away the souls of all beings for judgement, after the allotted span of life was given to Yama and so he is known as the God of death. Because he is impartial in the discharge of his duty, he is known also as Dharmaraja and hence the place where he worshipped is known as Dharmapuram. The place where Markandeya worshipped and where Yama was kicked to death is Tiru Kadavur situated about ten miles east of Dharmapuram. There is a large and popular temple in the place, where this legend is celebrated in an important festival in the month of April. This temple is also administered by the Dharmapuram Adhinam.

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GLOSSARY OF RELIGIOUS TERMS

Acharya	—	spiritual teacher.
adhinam	—	monastery, instituion for religious administration.
agama	—	the Saiva scripture, like the Veda.
ananda	—	joy, bliss.
anava	—	the first impurity of the soul in Saivism ; ignorance or the ego.
asura	—	demron.
bhavana	—	contemplation.
carya	—	observance.
cit	—	consciousness.
dharma	—	duty, justice, righteousness.
diksha	—	initiation.
guru	—	preceptor.
guru puja	—	worship on the anniversary day of a preceptor or saint.
jnana	—	divine knowledge.
karma	—	action.
kriya	—	rituals, rites.
linga	—	form ; the formless-form of Siva.
mantra	—	mystic syllable.
maya	—	generally called illusion, but much more in Saiva Siddhanta.
murti	—	image.
mutt	—	monastery.
pada	—	part, path.

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paramparai	—	line of succession.
prakasa	—	illumination.
puja	—	worship.
saiva	—	a follower of Siva.
sakti	—	the Universal Mother, the inseparable consort of Siva; the Power of God.
samadhi	—	state of meditative oneness with the Spirit.
samaya	—	religion.
sambandha	—	connection.
santana	—	lineage.
sastra	—	scripture.
mukti	—	liberation, salvation.
sat	—	existence.
sivacharya	—	one who has been assigned the duty of worship of Siva from the very ancient past.
Sokkanatha	—	the handsome Lord.
tiru	—	a prefix to names, places and books, signifying holy or sacred.
vaishnava	—	a follower of Lord Vishnu.
veda	—	sacred book of divine knowledge.
yoga	—	thought control, union.

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